

## Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 IO-04 ISO-00 SAM-01 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3001

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ST

SUBJ: SAO TOME: BLACKS WANT COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

SUMMARY: THE BLACK POPULATION OF SAO TOME SEEMS TO DESIRE COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MLSTP. THERE IS NO SENTIMENT FOR TIES WITH ANGOLA OR GABON. THE RACIAL SITUATION IS TENSE BUT WHITES HAVE ACCEPTED THE INVITABILITY OF BLACK RULE AND ARE NOT ORGANIZING ANY POLITICAL RESISTANCE. ALL GROUPS IN SAO TOME IN THE DARK AS TO THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS AND LOOK TO LISBON OR LIBREVILLE FOR DIRECTION. WE EXPECT THE GOP TO MAKE A DECISION SHORTLY.

1. A CONGEN OFFICER VISITED SAO TOME OCTOBER 15-17 AND REPORTS THAT ALL GROUPS ON THE ISLAND WITH SOME HE SPOKE (WHITE, BLACK, THE GOVERNMENT, THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT) HAVE ACCEPTED THE INEVITABILITY OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE PROVINCE AND THAT THE MOVEMENT FOR THE LIBERATION OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE (MLSTP), BASED IN LIBREVILLE HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT AS THE "ONLY LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE" OF THE ISLANDS' 70,000 PEOPLE. THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ANY OTHER POLITICAL GROUP, WHITE OR BLACK, COMPETING FOR POWER AND THE ACTING GOVERNOR STATED THAT IF

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ONE SHOULD SPRING UP IT WOULD BE JUDGED "OPPORTUNISTIC" AND WOULD

NOT BE WELL RECEIVED BY THE PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (MFA). THERE ALSO WAS UNANIMITY AGAINST ANY UNION OR FEDERATION OF SAO TOME WITH ANY NATION AT THE PRESENT TIME, ALTHOUGH A LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MLSTP HINTED THAT, AFTER INDEPENDENCE, SOME TIES WITH ANOTHER STATE MIGHT BE DESIRABLE.

2. THE MLSTP IN SAO TOME IS REPRESENTED BY THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION OF THE MLSTP. TWO OF THE LEADERS OF THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION ARE WOMEN; ALDA ESPIRITO SANTO, AND ALDA BANDEIRA. THE LATTER IS A YOUNG, LISBON EDUCATED MILITANT AND HER AGGRESSIVE NATURE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE MOVEMENT'S RATHER OBSCURE POLICIES SET HER APART FROM THE OTHERS AND INDICATE SHE IS THE CLOSEST THERE IS TO A POLITICAL FIGURE ON THE ISLAND. THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION, HOUSED ON THE EDGE OF THE CITY OF SAO TOME IS A SMALL SHANTY PLASTERED WITH POSTERS FROM MPLA, PAIGC AND FRELIMO, PROFESSES TO BE NOTHING MORE THAN THE HANDMAIDEN OF THE LIBREVILLE BASED MLSTP. ITS ONLY FUNCTION IS TO ACT AS THE LOCAL ARM OF THE LEADERS OF THE MLSTP AND TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR THEIR RETURN AFTER 14 YEARS OF SELF-IMPOSED EXILE. THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION CLAIMS NOT TO KNOW WHEN THE MLSTP LEADERS WILL RETURN. IN FACT, THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION PROFESSES TO KNOW NOTHING. ALL QUESTIONS ON THE MOVEMENT'S POLICIES WERE ULTIMATELY ANSWERED BY REFERRING THE OFFICER TO A ONE PAGE "PROGRAM" OF THE MLSTP THAT IS ITSELF LONG ON GENERALITIES (TRANSLATION FOLLOWS BY SEPTTEL). THE LEADERS AGREED THAT THE TIMING FOR INDEPENDENCE AND THE TYPE OF TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT ALL DEPEND UPON THE UPCOMING NEGOTIATION, WHICH THEY SAID WOULD TAKE PLACE BETWEEN LISBON AND THE MLSTP CHIEFS IN LIBREVILLE, WITHOUT THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION'S PARTICIPATION, AT A TIME AND PLACE UNKNOWN TO THEM. THE ONLY POINTS THAT THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION WOULD TAKE A STAND ON WERE THE ABSOLUTE NEED FOR LAND REFORM AND THE ABSURDITY OF A PLEBISCITE FOR INDEPENDENCE. AFTER BELABORING THE LATTER POINT WITH RHETORIC BORROWED FROM FRELIMO, THE LEADERS GAVE THE CONGEN OFFICER THE TEXT OF AN AGREEMENT SIGNED IN LIBREVILLE ON OCTOBER 3 BETWEEN MLSTP AND A PORTUGUESE DELEGATION IN WHICH, INTER ALIA, THE REQUIREMENT FOR AN ELECTION IS RECOGNIZED AS UNNECESSARY BY BOTH PARTIES (TRANSLATION FOLLOWS BY SEPTTEL).

3. THE SAO TOME GOVERNMENT SEEMED EQUALLY REMOTE FROM THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS. THE GOVERNOR WAS IN LISBON, AND THE ACTING GOVERNOR, AN ARMY MAJOR, HAD NO IDEA WHEN OR WHERE NEGOTIATIONS WOULD TAKE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PLACE. HE DID SAY THAT THE LEADERS OF MLSTP COULD RETURN ANY TIME THEY DESIRED AND WOULD BE WELCOMED "WITH OPEN ARMS."

4. WHITES WERE PREDICTABLY APPREHENSIVE OVER THE PROSPECTS FOR INDEPENDENCE, BUT ARE RESIGNED TO THIS OUTCOME AND WILL LEAVE ONLY IF THEY FEEL THEY CANNOT CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THEIR ECONOMIC POSITION. THERE WERE 4000 WHITES IN SAO TOME BEFORE APRIL 25. ONE SOURCE, WHITE, SAYS OVER 3000 HAVE FLED WHILE ANOTHER, BLACK,

PUTS THE FIGURE AT NO MORE THAN 450. THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO FIGURES ON THIS BUT DOESN'T THINK MANY HAVE LEFT. NO WHITE POLITICAL MOVEMENT OR ARMED RESISTANCE SEEMS TO BE FORMING.

5. WE HESITATE TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS ON THE POLICIES OF THE MLSTP OR THE FUTURE OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE BASED ON THE SKETCHY INFORMATION NOW AVAILABLE ON THE ISLAND. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS WILL TAKE PLACE ELSEWHERE AND THE DECISIONS WILL BE MADE BY LISBON AND THE MOVEMENT'S LEADERS IN LIBREVILLE. HOWEVER, THERE DO NOT SEEM TO BE ANY REAL STUMBLING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE AND WE DO THINK THAT A TRANSITIONAL OR INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT WILL BE IN PLACE BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

6. I OBTAINED SOME ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS INTO THE SITUATION ON SAO TOME FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF LUANDA, WHO IS ALSO BISHOP OF SAO TOME. HE WENT TO THE ISLAND AFTER THE TROUBLES IN SEPTEMBER IN RESPONSE TO URGENT MESSAGES FROM THE CLERGY THERE. THE ARCHBISHOP TOLD ME ON HIS RETURN THAT HE FORESEES NO REAL PROBLEMS IN GRANTING INDEPENDENCE OR AUTONOMY TO SAO TOME. IN CONTRAST TO WHAT THE CONGEN OFFICER FOUND, THE ARCHBISHOP BROUGHT BACK THE NEWS THAT MOST ISLANDERS WANT A FEDERATION WITH EITHER LIBREVILLE OR ANGOLA. HE FINDS THAT THE ISLANDERS HAVE A HIGH RATIO OF SKILLED PERSONS AND PROFESSIONALS AND ARE QUITE CAPABLE OF RUNNING THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. THE WEAK SPOT, HE SAID, IS THAT THE ISLANDS NOW DEPEND FOR MANY OF THEIR SUPPLIES ON VESSELS THAT PLY BETWEEN PORTUGAL AND HER AFRICAN COLONIES. FLOUR, FOR EXAMPLE, IS IMPORTED. AFTER INDEPENDENCE SOME BASIC SHIFTS WILL HAVE TO BE MADE IN THE ECONOMY. ACCORDING TO THE ARCHBISHOP TOURISM HAS GREAT POSSIBILITIES. (THE CONGEN OFFICER LEARNED DURING HIS TRIP THAT A GROUP OF GERMAN BUSINESSMEN HAVE TENTATIVE PLANS TO INVEST IN A TWO HUNDRED ROOM HOTEL WHICH THEY PLAN TO FILL BY BRINGING IN PLANELOADS OF TOURISTS) THE ARCHBISHOP ALSO TOLD ME THAT THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION SEEMS TO BE AT THE CENTER OF THINGS AND PROVIDING DIRECTION TO BLACKS. THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONGEN OFFICER FOUND THE ASSOCIATION TO BE ILL-INFORMED AND NOT SURE OF ITSELF, ALTHOUGH HE ALSO REPORTS THEIR HEADQUARTERS IS THE CENTER OF A GOOD DEAL OF ACTIVITY. I IMAGINE THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF ANYONE WILLING TO TAKE CHARGE, BLACKS TURN TO THE ASSOCIATION FOR GUIDANCE ON THEIR DAILY PROBLEMS. THE ARCHBISHOP SAID THAT THE ASSOCIATION IS ESPECIALLY ACTIVE IN HANDLING WORK PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE COCOA PLANTATIONS. KILLORAN

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